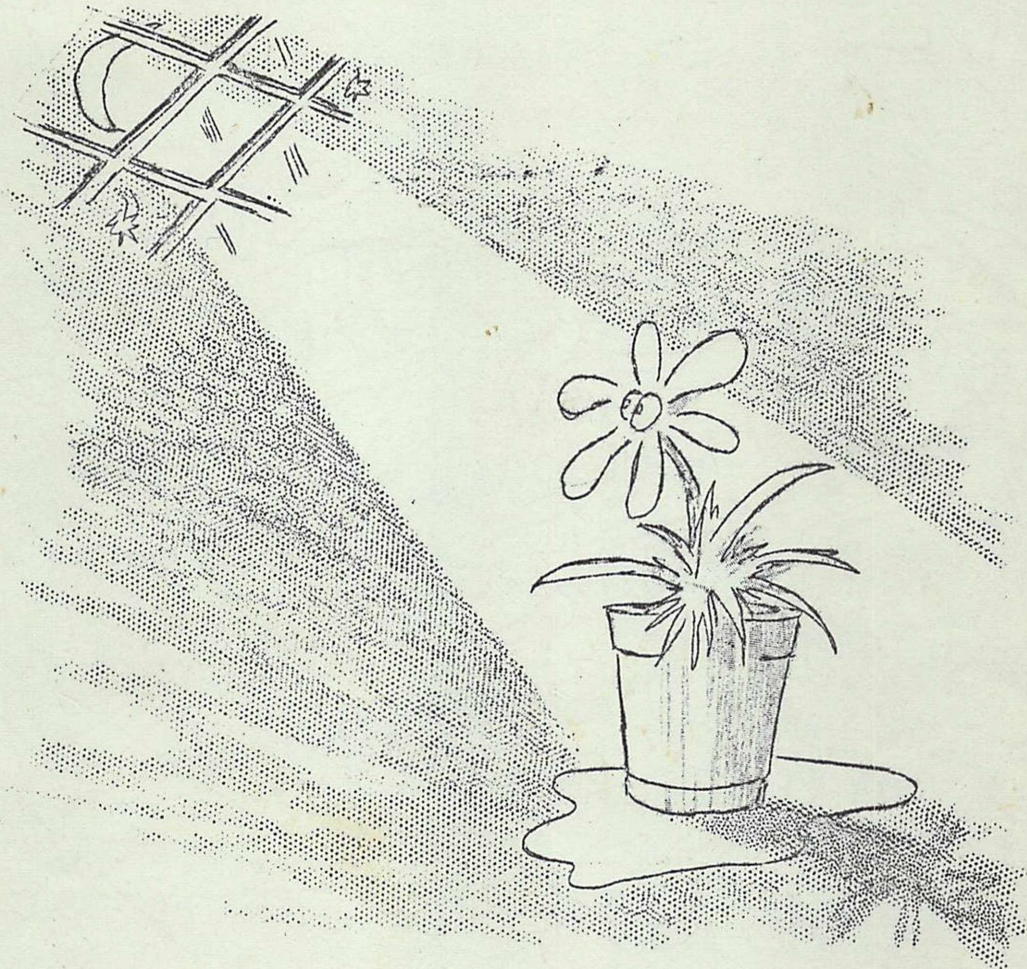


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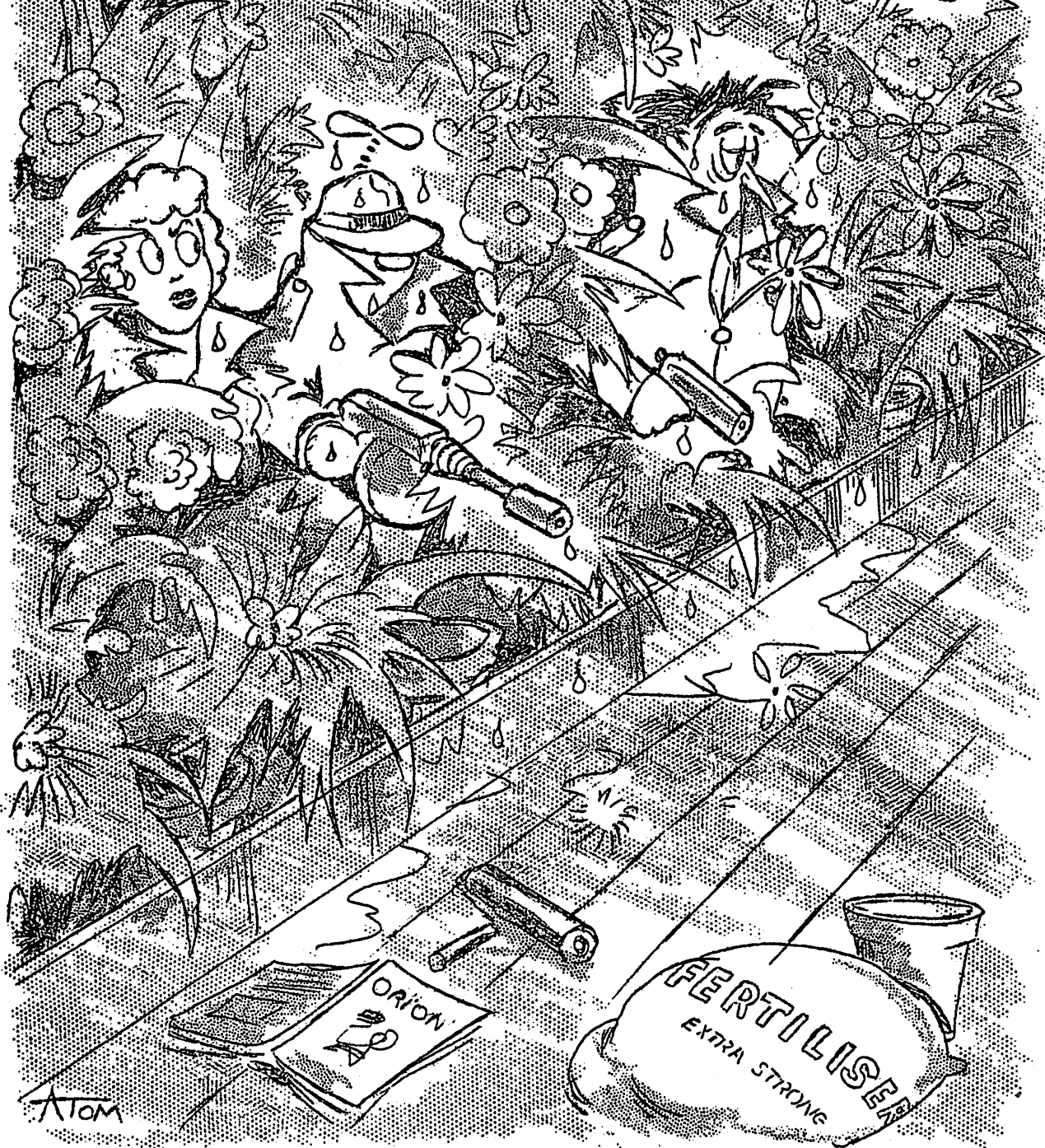
A G.D.A. FACTUAL INVESTIGATION
BY

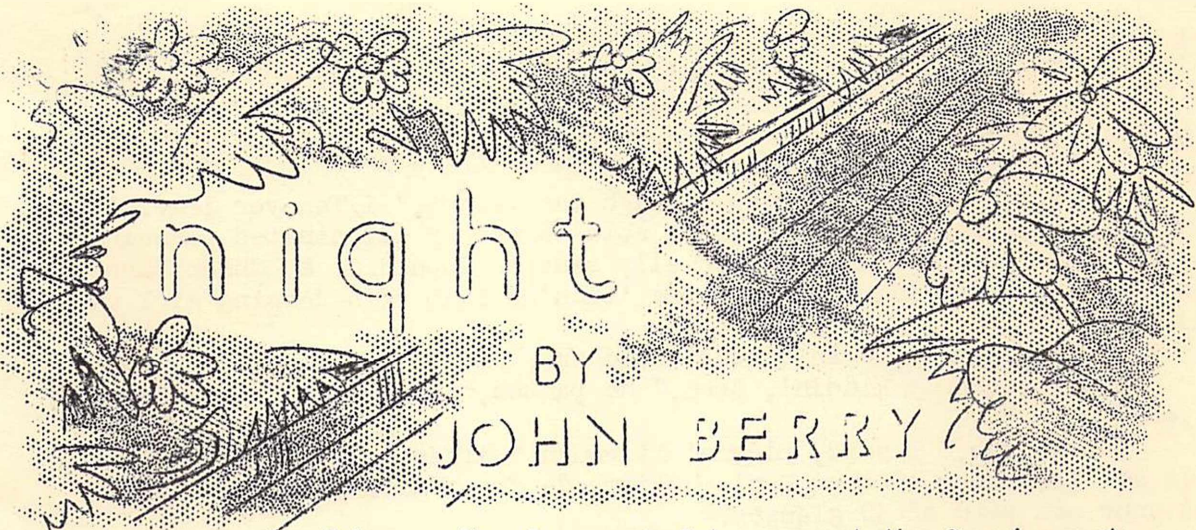
JOHN BERRY

A COON LIBRARY PUBLICATION

NO. 2

cloche by





I have often been asked to recount the Goon's most unusual investigation. There was never any need for me to seek out the Goon Casebook.....because the greenhouse business is branded forever on my mind. Old Man Enever hired my agency to seek out and identify the mysterious stranger who haunted his vast greenhouses and acres of market garden during the night. At the time this inquiry originated, I was extremely busy investigatin' my wife, whom I had discovered was writing articles, under my own roof, and sending them to FEMIZINE without my knowing anything about it until the cold print sneered up at me.

Of course, the fact that Arthur and myself are now known throughout fandom as the Flowerpot Men is merely one of the far reaching implications that arose from the result of the Enever biz. Hey, folks. Don't get the impression that the G.D.A. slipped up. No sir. I feel that I must inform you that so far we have a 100% record of successweeeell, that's not including the Cedric Hoax, but we of the GDA don't talk about that. I think I can safely say, on behalf of all my operatives that we aim to serve fandom in whatever way we can, and the Enever inquiry bears out what sacrifices we are prepared to take in fulfilment of our self-imposed task. For this reason alone, I'll tell you the complete story of the thing, leavin' out nuthin'. Take a deep breath, keep the smellin' salts handy, and read on :-

"Psssssst" I breathed outa the corner of my mouth, "pssst." Art flapped the palm leaf in his left hand, and shuffled his feet in the moss-filled flowerpot.

"Take that sunflower outa yer mouth, Art" I hissed, "what time is it?"

With slow, tired movements, Art lifted his wrist and looked at the dial of his watch.

"It's exactly three twenty nineand fifty nine seconds am" he whimpered.

"Oh no," I groaned, tryin' to hop outa the way, but it was too late. The overhead automatic spray fizzed into action, as it did every half hour, and a gentle stream of water showered over us. Heck. Seventh time this morning, I gritted to myself. The water dripped down the stem of the Selaginella Selaginoides which was rammed down the back of my shirt, although the ferns over my head afforded some slight umbrella-like protection.

Art looked at me sorta frustrated.

"I'm thinking of resignin', Goon," he announced.

Suffering Catfish. This bhoy was desertin' me in my hour of need. I had to play this careful.

I'm kinda shrewd, see.

"Art," I said, peering through the fronds, "iffen yer leavin' the GDA, then O.K. Pity you'll never be able to see my illustrated pornography 'A Thousand And One Nights', specially sent to Goon H.Q. by Chick Derry as his annual subscription. There's one 'ticular illo of a dancing girl and all her ..."

The steam rose in clouds round Art.

"I was only kiddin', Goon," he panted, "lemme see it to-morrow...
...eh?"

"Course," I said, playin' it rough, "iffen it's a rise yer want, I'll get some more of them Paris-Hollywoods from Walt. I presume you've got your own pair of 3D glasses?"

Art lifted a hand, pulled away a sunflower, grinned coyly, returned the sunflower to his mouth, and resumed his imitation of a tropical plant.

"Do you think HE will come tonight...er..this morning?" asked Art at length.

"Heck, I sure hope so," I mused. "By the way, what's the time?"

Before Art could answer, the spray told me it was 4 a.m. Good job the water was luke-warm. If nothing else, I had learned some of the complications of running a market garden. Shakin' the drops outa my moustache, I reached up and took a coupla grapes. Shure, Paul would never miss 'em.

All the same, folks, I felt sorta stupid. I asked myself ...why? Why was Art and myself standing in flower pots in one of Enevers green-houses at 4 a.m., getting sprayed every thirty minutes, disguised as giant pteridophyta? What had caused this ... this most un-Goonlike behaviour? My mind staggered back to those few short days ago, when Old Man Enever had applied to the London Branch of the GDA for assistance

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I had paid a visit to Art, head of the London Branch. Art had asked me to come over from Belfast for a discussion ... the Redd Grayson case was worrying him. We put a sign 'PRIVATE - GOONS IN CONFERENCE' on the front door of number 17 Brockham House, and we both settled down to study some of the foto's Art had bought back home with him from Port Said when he was in the R.A.F. Heh heh. Yuk yulk. Hmmmmmm. I got out my magnifying glass.

Bzzzzzz.....bzzzzzz.....bzzzzzz.

"Thats Olive at the front door," breathed Art, the whites of his eyes showin' like CinemanscopE screens.

He straightened his orange and puce bow tie in the mirror, winked at hisself, then blanched, rushed back to the table, flung a coupla Mickey Mouse Annuals onta it, then sprang back to the door.

"Good evening, sweetest," he cringed, looking shyly at his thick soled shoes as he opened the door.

"Hey, watch what yer doin', Art " I yelled. "Yer talking to an old man. You'll get the place raided iffен yer carry on like that."

"I say," crowed the man indignantly from the doorway.

Art grinned in a strained manner.

"Come in, Paul," he bowed.

Heck.

I whipped out my gat.

"Stand back, Enever," I rasped, "else I'll rinse ya. I know my ORION sub expired last week, but there's no need to rush me. I get annoyed if folks rush me. I'm tellin' you...if ya look like that at me agin, I'll water that weed in yer buttonhole."

Sometimes, folks, I just can't control these spasms of sadism.

"Calm yourself, Goon," murmured Paul in a cultured accent, wavin' a picture of Marilyn Monroe defensively in front of him, "I've come to obtain help from the GDA."

I looked at Paul. Right enough, he gave me the impression of being a desperate man. I could tell he was in a hurry, either that or the watering can in his left hand was his last line of defence.

"Take a seat," breathed Art, actin' sorta proffessional.

"My fee," I hissed, leaping onto Pauls chest.

My financial mind asserting itself, see.

"I've got some packets of flower seeds," smiled Paul.

"What sorta flower seeds?" asked Art.

"Passion Flower seeds," replied Paul.

"Will do," I yelled. Anything for a new sensation. "So we're workin' for ya, Paul," I told him, ignoring his vince, "what kinda case is it....divorce?"

"No."

"Abduction?"

"No."

Hmmmmmm.

"Seduction?"

"No."

Mmmmmmm.

"Er...any sex in the case at all?"

"No."

Blast it.

"Take over, Art," I said, sorta disappointed.

I could see Art was tryin' to impress me with his efficiency by the way he was slapping Paul across the face with TRIODE 7.

"Iffen ya want results," reasoned Art, using my subtle approach, "you've gotta tell us everyfink, see."

Paul kinda trembled a mite, as if he had some sorta regrets.

"Well, goons," he said, cowering under the table, "a mysterious figure is wandering around my greenhouses in the middle of the night."

"Eric Needham," I yawned. I like simple cases. That's really the reason for my phenominal success....that, and my brilliant analytical mind.

"Needham?" mumbled Art, crouching next to Paul.

"Come from under that table, Art," I growled. I was getting the run-around, folks. I'm even tempered, but sometimes, when folks can't follow my reasoning, I begin to see red. I waved my gat. "It's pure logic, see. I reason thisaway. Eric begins to think he is losing his technique, and he knows Paul has a lotta glass he can practice on, so he comes in the middle of the night, and starts flappin' his shammy about."

Paul backed into the kitchen.

"But Eric lives in Manchester," he shouted.

"So?" I said, sorta baffled.

"And I live in Middlesex," I heard Paul yell.

"And?" I frowned.

"Tell him, Art," sobbed Paul.

"Y'see, Goon, Manchester and Middlesex are a coupla hundred miles apart," explained Art, reachin' fer his umbrella.

"That's a point," I confessed.

Y'see, folks, sometimes the long shot doesn't always pay off.

I looked at Paul. He was biting his lip. If I didn't know my own agency better, and appreciate the esteem with which it is held in fandom, I would have deduced that Paul was going to withdraw from the case.

"On second thoughts," he began, leaping for the door, "I think I'll contact Scotland Yard instead. This doesn't .."

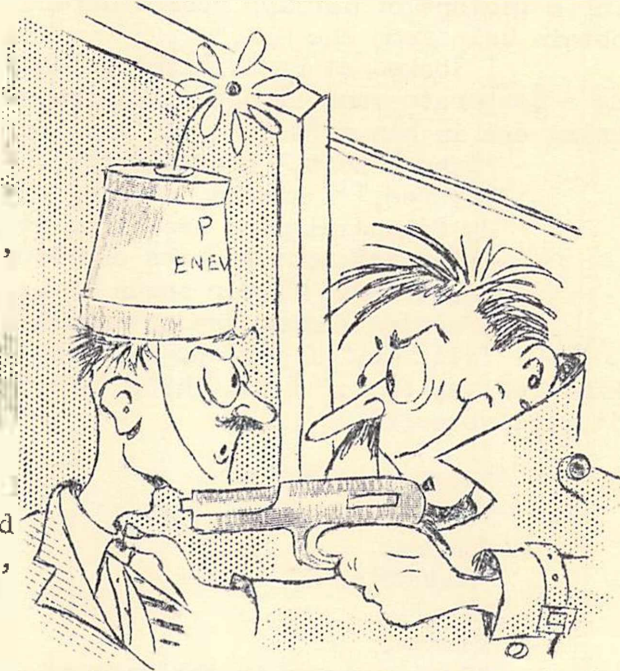
"Impulsive Paul," I soothed, pinning him between the doorway and allowing a dribble of London County Council H2O to trickle down the back of his neck by a gentle pressure of the trigger of my zap, "don't be too hasty. The GDA hasn't been beaten yet,"

I kicked Arts shin.

"Oh, er...no sirree," panted Art, taking the subtle hint, "no, we have a record of never having let a client down."

"Exactly," I soothed again, "so just give me the key to your greenhouses, and we'll do the rest. Send the fee immediately. Now git."

"Now get them Port Said foto's out, Art," I gritted, after Paul had staggered away, "I gotta think about this.....good...now pass me the magnifying glass."



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It was midnight. We stood outside the main door of:-

ENEVER'S MARKET GARDEN. GUARANTEED NO DANDELION SEED CONTENT.

I pulled my coat collar higher, and squinted at Art through the button hole in the lapel. I turned, and looked at Olive, Arts wife, through the slit in the brim of my trilby. The Thomsons were a great asset to the GDA. Olive was a pipperoo, see, and I was hopin' Paul would raise the fee if he saw I was bringing her along too. He would know that Art would be givin' his all. Sometimes, folks, I even amaze myself with the power of my foresight....at my ability to plan ahead.

"Psssst," I hissed to Art, "is that tub full of green slimy water by the shed?"

"Yep," confirmed Art.

I went over and loaded my zap. This case could be dangerous.

"Follow me," I ordered, and we noiselessly tiptoed through the doorway, and into Pauls market garden. There seemed to be acres of glass...

.....dozens of greenhouses. An atmosphere settled over us like a cloud. I felt sorta strange....worried, if you know what I mean.

Suddenly, Olive screamed.

"What's wrong?" I snarled.

"Something.....something moved over there."

I looked across a row of stunted spuds.

"I can't see anythin'" I panted.

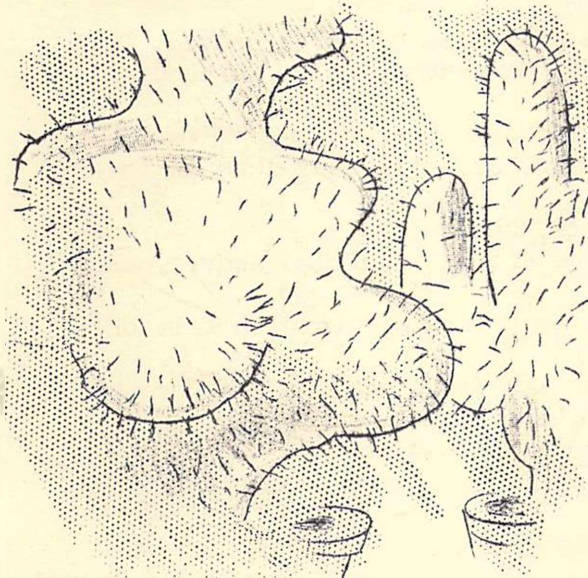
"Oh, sorry," said Olive, with a modest wave of her hand, "it was only the shadow of that tree made by the moonlight."

I breathed a sigh of relief, and got down off Art's shoulders. Daren't take a chance, see.

We continued the trek. We covered every inch of the dump. We walked round the place half a dozen times. No sign of nuthin'. I led my operatives into the doorway of a greenhouse, and Art lit a cigarette.

There didn't seem much to say. We had done as much as we could. But the GDA is famed for the slick way it works. I wanted to study the situation. I wanted to give Paul the full power of my mental processes. I wanted to earn my fee. No one spoke.

I looked at the silhouette of a cactus on the greenhouse wall. Iffen I sorta half closed my eyes, I could imagine Anita Eckberg as she would look through a set of filmy curtains. It almost seemed to move. Shure did look like Anita. I'd hafta.....



Olive slapped my face.

"You might be the Goon," she shouted. "But that don't give you any authority to slap me on the small of the back."

"See here sister," I gritted. "I was looking at Ani - at that cactus shadow on the wall. I didn't"

"Heck, Olive," grunted Art. "I was lookin' at the Goon. His face was wreathed in a celestial smile. He didn't touch ya."

Olive smiled at Art, her eyes full of affection.

"Shucks, honey," she said, puttin' her head on his shoulder.

Hey, folks, have you ever felt kinda unwanted?

I returned to my cactus.

Cor. As a cloud moved over the moon, the silhouette sorta rippled. Hmnnnnnn. Boysoboy.

Someone thumped me on the back.

I turned to Art.

"Look here," I grunted. "I know you are my best operative, but that ain't no excuse fer frivolity when we're out on a job. I've had occasion to mention this to you before."

"Heck," panted Art, "I was whisperin' to Olive."

"You mean to sweat there and tell me you didn't punch me on my back?" I insisted.

"Nah," he replied.

"Did you, sister ?" I asked Olive.

I most certainly did not."

Heck.

Back to the cactus. When the moon really shone, the shadow of another cactus played on the wall. Looked a mite like Diana Dors. I looked in my pocket, produced the 'Diana Dors Book in 3D' that Bob Tucker sent me...I checked up her statistics....yessir, just like Diana Dors. No wonder Paul spent all his time in greenhouses. Heck. A thought struck me. Maybe the mysterious stranger was a sex-maniac. I mean, these silhouettes were life-like.....

"Give over, Goon," shouted Art.

"Swelp me, Art, wots wrong with ya ?" I panted.

"Aw, stop pushing me in the back," he warned. I could see he had drawn his gat. This bhoi was tough.

"Sure, I ain't touched ya," I said, sorta peeved. This was queer....somebody punched Olive...somebody punched me ...somebody punched Art....somebody

"O.K.Art," I said, my authority returning. "This job calls for action. You search the greenhouse, and I'll stay here in the doorway and guard Olive."

I'm a married man myself, see.

"Er...O.K.,Goon," panted Art. He shuffled away...came back in about ten seconds.

"No one around, Goon," he breathed, wipin' a film of sweat off his face, " you take a look."

"Nah," I replied. "your say-so is good enough for me."

I mused. This bhoi wasn't as sharp as I had thought. Did he actually think I'd go in there by myself ?

We huddled in an uncertain group in the shelter of the greenhouse door.

The moon was covered with clouds.

"No point in staying here, Art," I said eventually, " let's go back to your place."

I had a lot of thinking to do.

It wouldn't take me long to build a small greenhouse of my own...and cactus is pretty easy to grow.

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I sat enraptured at the breakfast table next morning... mebbe I should say later that morning. Art had a marvellous contraption. It was a toaster, worked, Olive maintained, by electricity. What amazed me was that when the toast was properly done, it jumped out of the machine and on to the nearest plate. Fascinating'.

"Have some cereal, Goon," said Olive, the perfect hostess.

"Nah," I munched, " I like toast." Even after my eleventh slice, I still hadn't formulated a theory about the toaster. Trouble was, me being a provincial

"Have a slice of grapefruit, Goon ?" asked Art, givin' me the benefit of his scarlet and orange dressing gown. I drew the blanket tighter round my shoulders.

"I've suddenly developed a passion for toast," I grinned feebly. I was buttering my seventeenth slice, when the door buzzed, and

Paul Enever peered round.

"Grab a chair and have a slice of toast, Paul," I yelled.

"This is business, Goons," he said. "I've decided that it was all a mistake. It was only a false alarm...there isn't any mysterious stranger visiting my greenhouses at night."

We looked at him.

"Honest there isn't," he sobbed, sinking to his knees.

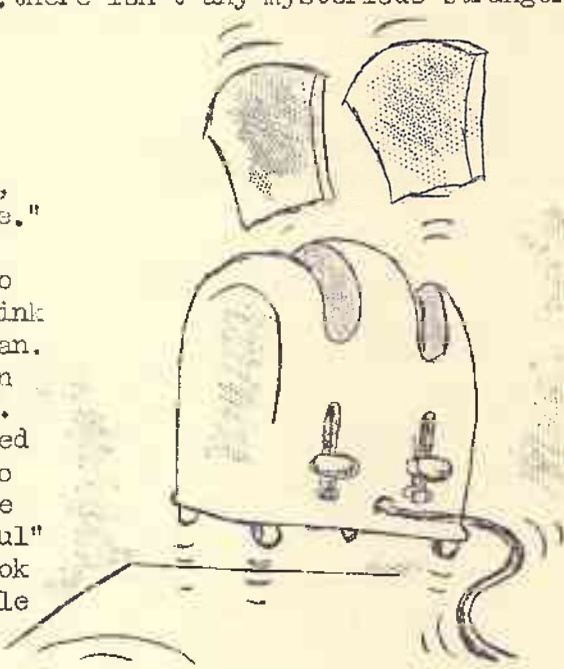
A slice of toast popped out.

"Please believe me," he screamed, "please, please, PLEASE drop the case."

I reached for the butter dish.

Hmmmm. This sort of thing happened to a lot of our clients. Sometimes I think we are too subtle for the ordinary fan. It takes them a little time to get on to our particular method of approach.

"Move over, Paul," I said. I waved my hand, indicating that he moved two feet forward. I studied his prostrate position. "Six inches to the left, Paul" I ordered, ignoring the desperate look in his eyes. "Now hold it, just a leetle bit more....just...a...leetle..now STEADY."



Plop. A slice of toast dropped into his breastpocket. I stroked my moustache with a marmalade-smeared finger. Bulls-eye.

"Look, Paul," I said, giving him the beady eye, "once you hire the GDA, we stick. Me an' my operatives have already spent some time on the case, in fact, I have put Olive on the payroll, three pictures of Gregory Peck and a snap of Bloch in his bathing costume. That's her fee. Hey, Olive, put that toaster back...er...where was I? Yep, Paul. I obtained a number of clues, and I think I shall be in a position to report something to you within a few days. Now git."

He looked a broken man as he staggered out of the room. We do have some peculiar clients. Some of them seem to have some horrible inner phobia..some deeply-ingrained fear, which seems to manifest itself when they visit us. We like to think we help them a little way on the road to recovery. Very few of our clients come back after the treatment we give them. As I said, we have a 100% record.

"What's the next move, Goon?" asked Art, pulling up his pyjama leg, and flashing his tartan socks.

"Wait a minute, Art," I gritted. Munny thing, but iffen I half closed my eyes, and looked at the vase on the table, it looked a mite like the back view of Sabrina. Funny how all different shapes seem to remind me of

"What's the next move, I asked ya," sneered Art.

This bhoy was getting out of control. Iffen I wasn't careful, he wouldn't ever let me play with his toaster anymore.

"Calm down, Art," I hissed. "Down bhoy. That's better. Now then. To work. I suggest that we go to the greenhouse agin tonight, without Olive. I suggest we disguise ourselves as tropical plants. My theory is that we were spotted last night by the mysterious stranger, and he kept out of the way. If we go there late tonight, and stand in a flower pot, we will

be unseen. If the boyo comes in we nab him. Better bring the long barrelled zap... this could be rough."

"Tell me, Goon," said Olive, tryin' to move my boots off the settee without me seeing her," what do you think was hitting us on the back last night?"

Heck.

Women.

"Looky here, gal," I reasoned. "You're tryin' to complicate things. Now pass me that buncha grapes."

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So that was how we came to be standing in flower pots in Enevers greenhouse at 4 am.

Suddenly, at the far end of the long greenhouse, I heard a slight scuffling ... a hardly noticeable shuffle of impatient feet. "Keep still," I whispered to Art, "this is it." I drew a fern over my face.

Art nodded, his face turning white. I didn't feel so good either. I got dependants, see, and I didn't pay my last premium.

A soft laugh reached our ears. A strange, high pitched giggle. It gradually got nearer. I edged close to Art. He's got big muscles, see.

The noise got nearer and nearer. I caught a few words

"Success...I've done it. I always said I would. Heh heh...."

I felt calmer now that my greatest hour had arrived. I felt kinda dedicated.

With calm deliberation, I reached into my waterproof holster and withdrew my rusty zap. I squeezed the trigger slightly...heard the faint drip..drip..drip..drip on the edge of the flowerpot. I heard Art gasp, and his pot rattled. "Quiet," I hissed. This was is...the Goon had at last cracked a case.

I looked down the greenhouse, and saw a vague shape approaching. A dark trilby was pulled low over a shadowed face... the figure shuffled along....came closerand closer.....

"Heh heh. Triumph. I always said it could be done."

I felt tense....a spasm of determination shivered through me. I saw the long barrel of Arts zap appear from behind his screen of fern.

The man stopped in front of us. I could see his face illuminated by the moonlight. It was an intelligent face...serene...composed...happy. I raised my zap, and took careful aim. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the long-barrelled zap stretch out to its fullest extent.

As the man turned away, I gave him a jet of H2O down the back of his neck. A stream of H2O from the long-barrelled zap gave him a severe rinsing. Unfortunately, the village clock struck 4.30.a.m, and the overhead spray burst into action again. I jumped off the flower pot, and grabbed the man by the coat, and jerked him to his feet. He was bigger than me, and just as I was about to let go, Art grabbed him to.

We turned him round.

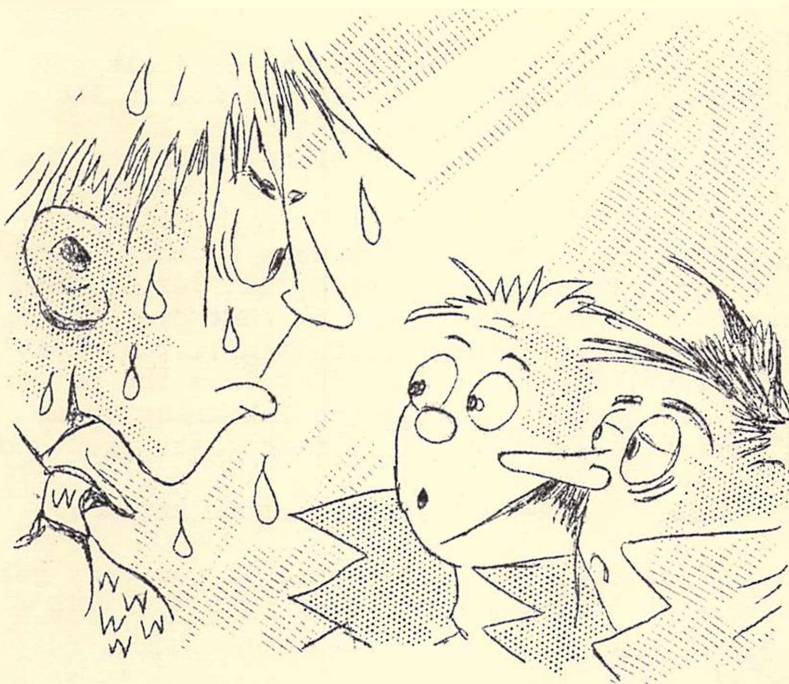
Things happened quickly.

"Swelp me," swooned Art, and sank to his knees salaaming with rever

"Heck, what gives, Art?" I shouted.

"On yer knees, quick, Goon," rattled Art in a stage whisper outa the corner of his mouth.

Suffering Catfish.



I had to rely on Art's appreciation of the situation. Things were happening too fast for me. I got down on my knees and salaamed too.

"You may get up now," said the man in a cultured voice.

I shuffled to my feet, sorta frustrated. Baffled again.

"S-s-s-sorry, sir," choked Art, dabbin' the gent with my hat.

"I should think so indeed," gritted the toff. Heck. I felt I was dreamin'.... I hoped I was.

"Listen, mister," I growled, "my agency has

been hired by Paul Enever to investigate the mysterious stranger mucking about in his greenhouse...and I reckon it's you....and...and...quit kicking me on the ankle, Art. Who is this gent, anyways?"

He told me.

"Er...let me...let me wring out yer coat, sir, er...wet weather we're havin' for the time of year, ain't it?", I said, sorta bewildered.

"Look here, you two," said the Gent, kinda soothing. "I have just carried out a great experiment, but I don't want anyone else to know about it until a few details have been cleared up. Would you mind keeping our little secret, until I'm ready?"

"Of course, sir," grinned Art, showin' his gums, and polishin' the gents shoes with my scarf," pray consider the incident closed."

"My fee," I shouted.

The gent smiled. He pressed a bundle in my hand.

"Many thanks, sir," I gasped.

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I sat back on the settee, drank my coffee and closed the book.

"Brilliant writing, Art," I sniffed.

"Shure is, Goon," murmured Art. I could see he was thrilled, too.

"But what was the gent doing in the greenhouse?" asked Olive.

"Right enough," I mused, "we can't list the case as closed until we do actually know what he was doing....even iffen we don't tell Paul."

"Let's go over the evidence we have accumulated," suggested Art.

A red flush swept over my face.

"Yer at it again," I warned.

"At what again?" asked Art.

"You used a five syllable word the," I complained.

"Sorry, Goon, I forgot. Now then, what do we actually know?"

I let my mind tick over for a coupla minutes, then I began a masterly

summing up of the clues.

"The gent lives in London, within easy distance of Pauls greenhouse. He goes to the greenhouse at night. He is working in the greenhouse, so we know he must be experimenting with some kind of plant. Now it must be a rather strange kind of plant, else why the experiment?"

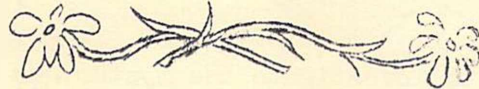
"So," said Art.

"So," I continued, "When Olive and we two were in the greenhouse the other night, we were struck by something, and yet no one was there. The inference must be that the plant or what ever the gent was cultivating was capable of movement...further...was capable of aggressive movement. Further, even, consider that, from the muttering the gent was doing, it was obvious that he was labouring under some form of obsession, trying to convince himself that the growth of this strange plant was possible"

"But what was he growing?" asked Olive and Art in unison.

I shook my head.

"We'll never know," I sighed. "Just the same, it was very good of John Wyndham to give us each an autographed copy of DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS."



John Berry.

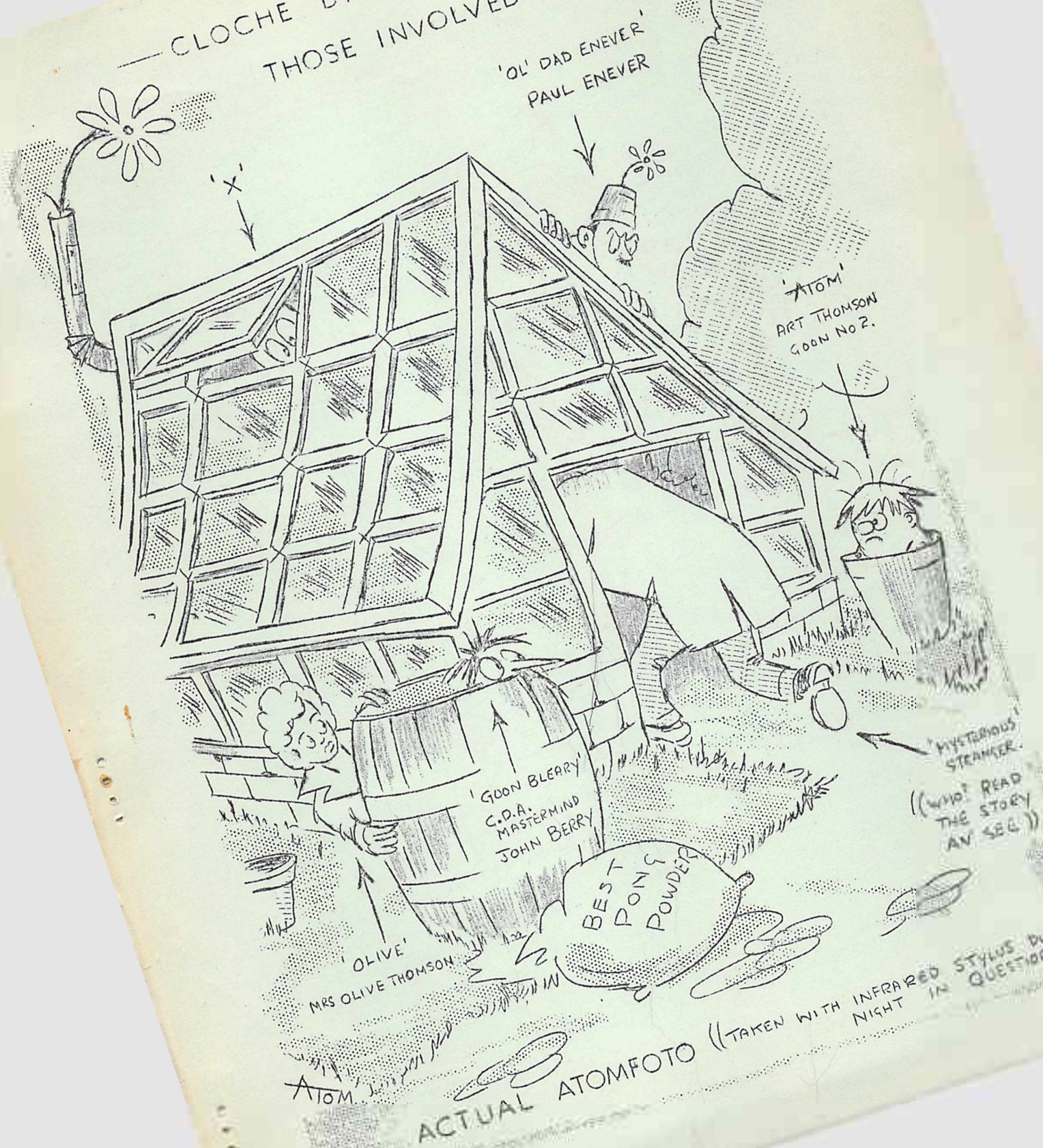
VOL. NO. 2, GOON LIBRARY
PRODUCED BY
GOON PRESS
ESOTERIC PUBLICATIONS LTD.

Printed and published by:- John Berry, 31 Campbell Park Ave, Belmont, Belfast, Northern Ireland. And. Arthur Thomson, 17 Brookham House, Brookham Drive, London, S.W.2. England.

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so. *****

CLOCHE BY NIGHT
THOSE INVOLVED





WATCH FOR THE GOON
HE WILL RETURN